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Notes and News 301
The Coming Budget Debate 304
Our London Letter 305
"Agricola Redivivus": Mr. Thorburn's Paper to the East India Association (Special Report) ... 306
Discussion: Speeches by Sir James Lyall 309
Sir Charles Stevens 309
Sir John Jardine 309
Mr. Romesh Dutt 309
Lord Stanley of Alderley 310
Sir Lepel Griffin 310
Mr. J. D. Rees 310
Mr. Leonard Courtney 310
Mr. Thorburn's Reply 310
Memorial to Mr. Nowrosjee N. Wadia 311
Advertisements 312

NOTES AND NEWS.

We give elsewhere a lengthy report of the paper, "Agricola Redivivus," read by Mr. S. S. Thorburn before the East India Association last Monday, and of the discussion which followed. There is no need at this moment to examine anew here the Punjab Land Alienation Act, upon which we have so often written. Our view, as our readers are aware, is that, however important it may be to check the power of money-lenders in India, this is only symptomatic treatment of the problem involved in agricultural destitution. Mr. Thorburn, it will be seen, tends to regard the Punjab Act as a model for all the rest of India. But the speakers who took part in the discussion agreed in treating it as an experiment in a special area. Perhaps the most interesting and important part of the paper was the description at first hand of the enquiry which paved the way for legislation. It is enquiry of this type which is needed in connexion with the prevention of famine. Mr. Thorburn, we are glad to see, reasserted his view of the necessity of such an investigation, and Sir John Jardine was no less emphatic upon the need of a national grant to set the people on their feet after the famine.

This (Friday) evening Mr. Romesh Dutt is to deliver an address to the Fabian Society upon "The Causes and Remedies of Indian Famines." The following is a brief syllabus of the address:—

> Indian problems extremely simple if rightly studied—Economic laws the same in India as elsewhere—Agriculture, Manufactures and a sound Finance the sources of national wealth everywhere—In India these sources of wealth narrowed under British rule: (1) Agriculture discouraged by an uncertain and varying Land Tax—Land improvements and savings discouraged by ever-increasing State-demand at recurring land settlements—(2) Manufactures directly discouraged by the East India Company for benefit of British manufacturers—by heavy import duties formerly imposed in England on Indian goods—by an unjust excise duty still imposed on produce of the Indian loom—(3) Financial arrangement unsound and uncontrolled by the people—Nearly one-half the net revenues sent out of India without direct return—Virtually all high appointments reserved for Englishmen; Indians being like Uitlanders in their own country—Conclusion: growing impoverishment of the people and frequent famines—ten famines within last forty years causing deaths of fifteen millions.

There should be ample material here for the members of the Fabian Society to exercise their wits upon.

The "Advocate of India" is up in arms against the Land Revenue Amendment Bill, recently introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council by the Hon. Mr. Monteath. From the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1859 downwards, all the legislation for the improvement of "the unhappy condition of the Indian peasantry has been, says our contemporary, but a process of tinkering, wholly ineffectual. The Government will not face the facts. The traditional land legislation "is based entirely on wrong principles, unsuited to the environments of the Indian cultivator and in collision with the first economic principles which are true in every age and every clime." The writer quotes from a Minute of Sir Louis Mallet's:—

> By a perpetual interference with the operation of laws which our own rule in India has set in motion, and which, I venture to think, are essential to success, by a constant habit of palliating symptoms instead of grappling with disease, may we not be leaving to those who come after a task so aggravated by our neglect or timidity that what is difficult for us may be impossible for them?

He calls for "a rational, humane, and business-like policy, such as is pursued by Lord Cromer with regard to the fellahs of Egypt." "Agricultural banks on the lines practically carried out there, and a less burdensome and more liberal policy of land revenue—these alone can alter the condition of the Indian cultivator."

The first reading of the Bill evoked strong hostile criticism, especially from the Hon. Messrs. Parekh and Gokhale, who no doubt "thoroughly understand the condition of the rayats of their respective districts," being in a position to enter into the experience of their countrymen far more intimately than the revenue authorities. We all know the special competency of Mr. Parekh; and it stands to reason that such a Bill should be introduced only as Mr. Gokhale contended, after an exhaustive enquiry into the true causes of agricultural misery and indebtedness. The "Advocate of India" administers a severe criticism to the sudden holding of the meeting of Council for the introduction of the Bill, "for the first time in the legislative history of Bombay," at Mahableshwar, "and that too at a date when it is customary for residents on that sanitarium, including the Government, to return to the plains." This is after the bad example of the Viceroy's Legislative Council's proceedings on the Punjab Land Alienation Bill at Simla. Why such urgency? Sir Charles Ollivant explained:—

> It does not seem to be sufficiently realised that this is an Enabling Bill—that our officers have gone on doing that which they all believed they had power to do, and have found their legal powers are now in jeopardy, and it was absolutely necessary that those powers should be legalised beyond a doubt. . . . . When I was in Gujerat there were plenty of short term leases. Are we to go on granting them contrary to law? We must have a Bill to legalise them.

The discovery of this illegality seems to have been made by Sir Antony MacDonnell's Commission. Here is a strange confession of innocence on the part of the revenue authorities. They don't seem to have known their Land Revenue Code—none of them, high or low! But what happens when such ignorance of the Code is manifested on the other side? "So far as the knowledge and experience of the public is concerned," says the "Advocate of India's" leader-writer, "it has a painful recollection of the rapidity, even harshness, with which the officers, high and low, from the Commissioner and the Collector to the Mamlatdar and the village patel, deal with all infringements of the land laws and regulations, and overwhelm absolutely illiterate and helpless offenders with the punishments prescribed." It is the way of the world.

From Mr. Monteath's speech introducing the Bill we gather that its three main points are these:—

> 1. "The maintenance of a visible boundary between fields."
> 2. "The clear specification of the authority by whom assessments may be fixed on lands assessed for one purpose, and appropriated to another, or on lands left unassessed at the settlement; and of the power to fix the assessment for a specified period, and to revise it at the end of that period."
> 3. "The grant of land on terms other than those specified in Section 73 of the Land Revenue Code."

The third is the most important point, according to Mr. Monteath. It was long supposed, he remarked, that the provisions of Section 73 were applicable only to persons holding on the survey tenure, and that it was competent for Government to allow the cultivation or other use of land it has an absolute right in on such terms as might seem suitable in special cases. Temporary occupation has thus been allowed in large areas of Sind affected by the vagaries of the Indus, in alluvial lands on the banks of other rivers, in lands granted to the wild tribes in Thana,

to the hill tribes in Kanara, and to the Bhils in West Khandesh, and in Sheri or Crown lands in Ratnagiri. Now, however, the law officers hold that every person legally invested with the right of possession and enjoyment in any form of land is an occupant, and, as such, has under Section 73 a heritable and transferable right in it. But, in no other part of India, the Government of Bombay is informed, is the State precluded from dealing with unoccupied land which is its absolute property as it deems fit. The Government professes to desire to seize "an opportunity of taking an important step towards the solution of that momentous problem of a remedy for agricultural indebtedness." It is an ominous circumstance that the Native members of Council unanimously condemned the Bill.

What is the principle of the land revenue? The "Advocate of India" concludes from a study of the entire land policy of the British Indian Government from the commencement of its rule that "it has never adhered to one principle." It points out that in 1856 the Court of Directors emphatically repudiated the doctrine of State proprietorship, and affirmed the principle that the assessment was revenue and not rent; the revenue being for convenience levied on the rent. "This sound, simple, and just principle," it recalls, was robustly affirmed by Sir Charles Wood (Viscount Halifax) who went still farther and fixed the rate of assessment at 50 per cent. of the net produce, "the same to which the indefatigable Mr. R. C. Dutt has fixed public attention in a marked degree during the last two years, and actively revived the dormant controversy." Here is one view, supported by very powerful authority. "But," the writer goes on to say, "this fundamental principle has been constantly left aside, notably since the days of Lord Dufferin, the exigencies of the Empire and the continuation of a mistaken foreign policy demanding a larger and larger annual expenditure, which it has been found difficult to meet by extra taxation," land revenue being the only sheet-anchor. He quotes from paragraph 27 of Sir Raymond West's brochure on "Land and the Law of India" (1873), recommending that the Government "should pronounce all land held from it to be either inalienable except with its assent, or else subject on alienation to a re-assessment and to the levy of a rack-rent for the benefit of the community"—just as if the Government had a clean slate to write upon. And "it is this doctrine, which, having been discarded by the Bombay Government for years, has now been resuscitated under the inspiration of the Hon. Mr. Monteath." The essence of the matter lies in this: "it is a mockery indeed to institute any kind of so-called benevolent legislation which has not for its object the relief of the rayat primarily, not from the hands of the money-lender, who is, after all, not so bad as he is represented, but from the effects of the policy of the Government itself in the matter of its mischievous rack-rent revenue assessments."

The state of the police in India has long been admitted on all hands to be most unsatisfactory. Those who boast of our rule as essentially the rule of justice admit that here there is a weak spot. Those who eagerly bear testimony to the freedom from corruption found among the Indians in Government employ, sorrowfully admit that the police are an exception. The Post Office in India loses by the dishonesty of officials a smaller proportion of what is entrusted to it than does the Post Office at home. But whatever may be the faults of the English police they are far surpassed in evil by the police of India. It would seem that the irresistible power of the British Government dazzles the ignorant men who exercise it, till they lose all sense of restraint. It is all the more necessary that they should be curbed by the continual vigilance of their superiors, and that there should not be even the remotest suspicion that the police will be shielded from punishment by the authorities making the policeman's cause their own.

Unfortunately the statistics of police administration during the year 1899-1900 are not reassuring. Out of less than 43,000 officers and men, over 2,000 were dismissed during that period, over 20,000 fined, degraded, or otherwise punished by the Department, and more than 1,500 convicted by the Courts. Striking as these figures are, it must be remembered that, as has been shown over and over again in the Courts, the conviction of a policeman is no easy matter, and that many of the worst crimes of that service have become known to the public only by accident or after long delay. Nor is the outlook improved when we turn to consider the educational standing of the police. Of the officers 14 per cent. cannot read or write, while the same is true of 57 per cent. among the men.

Among the commissioned officers in the police there are very few Indians. The "Englishman" in its review of Mr. O'Conor's statistics is not of course prepared to consider this an evil. But it makes a very suggestive admission. "It is a fact that the average European officer is likely to make grave mistakes till experience has taught him how to deal with Natives." And it endorses Kipling's remarks on the advisability of having as officers men familiar with the language of the district and with Oriental modes of thought, though with British instincts. But, failing this paragon of all the virtues, might not a good result be obtained by combining European and Indian officers, the former keeping up the traditions of the service, so far as they work for good, while the latter supplied the knowledge of the character and ways of the people?

An Indian correspondent writes from Bombay (June 8):—The Pennell affair is kept alive in the columns of the Bengal Press. The recent strictures of Mr. Geidt on the conduct of the Noakhali police have led many a publicist to expose the "shortcomings" of that body. Police reform is asked for everywhere. The police should be purged of the abuses and evils which have grown round it for many a year. The Government has pampered it to an extent which is now having its natural consequences. We are told that the populace is prone to exaggeration and jumps to universal condemnation of the police from the particular instances of corruption and abuse which the law-courts expose. True, but when the exposures by the law-courts are frequent in all provinces is the populace wrong if it infers that there is something rotten? And now more than ever, thanks to the paternal legislation of our rulers in the matter of salt, forests, excise, village sanitation, plague, and famine, the operations of the police enter into the lives of the poorest masses.

A long and somewhat acrid article on "Indian Education" appears in the "Times" (June 26), said to be "from a correspondent." The experiment of University education, he admits, "has not been an entire failure"; "the present-day Babu has some excellent qualities, and is in many ways an improvement on past generations," though the improvement may not be altogether due to college training. But "in spite of his virtues, it is unfortunately difficult to regard him in a very serious light." The writer explains:—

> He passes examinations, acquires a plentiful command of literary verbiage, and has a lofty sense of his superiority to the "uncultured" part of mankind, who have not even "failed" to take degrees. In another aspect he appears as a political nuisance, thrusting himself forward, without any apparent sense of incongruity, as a "natural leader and representative" of "the Indian people." . . . . His general attitude is unmistakably one of petulant antagonism.

The correspondent concludes that "it is out of the question" to drop education. Apparently, then, we had better try to improve our methods—better criticise our educational machinery than gird at the unsatisfactory article it now is said by some critics to turn out.

On the showing of the "Times" correspondent, there is obvious room for improvement in our methods. "The examinations," he says, "are so organised and conducted that only the most superficial and mechanical methods of study are likely to lead to success." This, at any rate, cannot be charged on the Babu. Is it not likely that that despised youth would shape himself for a more satisfactory sort of test with just as much alacrity and discrimination as he shows in getting up his work for the existing test? What is the good of examiners that can be vanquished by cram? The writer says that the mischief "could very easily be remedied by a few simple enactments": we should rather say by a few less simple or perfunctory examiners. If it be the case that "no practical step towards

a remedy appears to find favour with the University authorities," then the Government should step in. Why does it permit such a discreditable farce to go on? Lord Curzon, indeed, appears to have his eye on education, and it would be a good thing if he would take it in hand seriously. The "Times" correspondent says:—

If the control of educational matters were transferred from the miscellaneous secretaries of local governments to a Minister of Education, with a seat on the Viceroy's Council, there would be some hope of evolving a rational policy, and of establishing educational interests and the educational service in the place which they deserve to hold. Apart from other reasons, it is obviously of the first importance that men of first-rate ability should be drawn into the service.

Of course, one would like to see "a rational policy" and a good education. It ought to be attainable, if the authorities were very anxious about it. But it is not obviously a revenue-gathering project; on the contrary, it demands money that is apparently not to be had. And the more the education, the greater increase of embarrassment to the Government! Plainly something must be done, and done without delay, to provide outlets for the energies of the Babus that must and will be educated.

"Are the feet of clay of the Imperial Colossus to be found in Calcutta?" The question is put at the head of a pamphlet which we have received from the writer, who appears on internal evidence to have passed "the best of his life" in India—in the Civil Service. While admitting that there is ground for legitimate satisfaction in the attitude of Indian journalism during the South African war, he yet reminds us that there exists "a virtual censorship of the Press, which prevents all but the boldest of the Native editors from speaking their minds freely," and asks his readers to face the "sad fact which people do not like to be told," that we cannot "always count on the moral support of India when danger threatens the Empire, and feel that the splendid recruiting grounds afforded by the provinces inhabited by her martial races are as responsive to our call for aid as the other portions of the Empire." He puts forward two principal causes: (1) that "the other portions are identified with the Empire, and have their strongest interests in common with it"; and (2) that "they have all they can reasonably demand or require"; whereas "neither of these conditions obtains in the case of India." Thereupon he proceeds to the main object of the pamphlet—"to offer a few suggestions towards altering this lamentable state of things, a problem which must always appear to the thoughtful politician as one of the gravest which besets the Empire, and one which will become more grave as time goes on."

The writer is a moderate man. He thinks the "forward" or "national" party want to go too far, and have discredited themselves with all moderate thinkers. What is this party? He does not explain. On the other hand, he repudiates "the uncompromising supporters of things as they are, who want to let India too severely alone." He cries out for a middle course—for "some organisation which should bring together all true well-wishers of India" in co-operation; and for a journal with the double object of recording the proceedings of the association, and of thorough discussion of all subjects appertaining to the well-being of the country. Hear this:—

One of the most grievous wrongs that the so-called friends of India (i.e., the official class) have done to their country is to brand all criticism of the administration as disloyalty. Calm temperate criticism of administrative measures, straightforward representation of the views of the masses in reference to them, and how pre-conceived theories actually work in practice—the very life-blood of an administration whose first object is the people's good—is, therefore, strangled and starved into non-existence.

Evidently the writer has not tried his hand at such an association and such a journal. Let him write and speak "calm temperate criticism" and he will soon find himself regarded as a firebrand—and disloyal, of course. Let him make "straightforward representations," and he will soon find that somebody says he goes too far, and perhaps has discredited himself with moderate thinkers.

What our writer proposes to have done—"without interfering in the slightest degree with the general lines on which the administration is carried on"—he sets forth under four heads. (1) He wants to solve "the all-important but well-worn theme of social intercourse"—a problem whose non-solution is fraught with danger; but, besides the provision of "a local administration more perfectly cognisant of local conditions," he only suggests that "each Representative of the Queen in India" might give "even a quasi-official reception or gathering, say on her Majesty's birthday, as it comes round every year." (2) He pleads for "a more sympathetic attitude on the part of the European community in India towards the Indian Press." "Under judicious guidance" an indigenous press "might do yeoman service in bringing the exotic official into touch with the people he has to govern, and supplying the crying need of the country at the present day—an insight into what is going on beneath the surface of things." (3) He urges the development of India through commerce and manufacture, so as to make it as far as possible self-supporting. (4) He recommends a larger employment of Native talent in the administration. Now these are his "moderate" proposals—proposals familiar enough in our own columns. But they are only principal proposals among many others of not inconsiderable importance. For example, an answer is necessary to those who ask for reform in the Revenue and Police systems, who complain of the general treatment that educated Natives receive at the hands of Europeans, who demand an open career for the military aristocracy of the country, who bitterly point to the ruin of the industries and to the concentration of lucrative employment in official or European hands, who groan under the burden of taxation, and so forth. Though we do not subscribe to the efficacy of all the writer's remedies, we agree in the main with his diagnosis, and cordially commend this pamphlet to the widest attention.

The "Times" (June 25) deals very suggestively with the pending project of a reconstruction of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, or, rather, as it expresses the matter, "the construction of a Court of Appeal from the Colonies and India." The writer, however, limits his view to the Colonies; at any rate he says nothing specifically about India. Yet India has suffered more severely in recent years than any or all of the Colonies. The stringent criticisms of Sir Comer Petheram illustrate, but by no means exhaust, the unfortunate condition of things. "It seems a pity," writes our contemporary, "that even at this early stage some of the eminent lawyers who practise in the Privy Council should not be taken into the confidence of the framers of the Bill." That is one useful suggestion, certainly. But what we should like to know is this: Have any of the eminent Native judges of the High Courts in India, or any of the equally competent leading Natives at the Indian Bar, been taken into consultation? And if not, why not? The Colonies have been elaborately and ceremoniously consulted. Is not India worth consultation? We take it that India has not been, and will not be, consulted. Not that India is explicitly held to be not worth consultation, but on the constitutional ground that India is a Dependency, and not a Colony with self-government, India, therefore, must take what it pleases the authorities here to decide. We need not point out how rapidly and decisively the opinion of the leaders of Indian thought is throwing this antique view into obsolescence. We trust that the authorities here will rise above mere forms, and grasp the pith of the matter. India must not only be consulted, but it must be represented far more efficiently than it ever has been. And its proper representatives will be, not superannuated Englishmen that have happened to hold high judicial office in India, but the ablest Native lawyers that can be got for the money.

Remittances on India for 45 lakhs were on Wednesday offered for tender by the India Council, and the applications amounted to Rs. 27,50,000 in bills at 1s. 3⅞d. and 1s. 3d. and 29-32nds. The following amounts in bills were allotted:—8 lakhs on Calcutta, 6 lakhs on Bombay, and 2 lakhs on Madras, all at an average of 1s. 3.906d. Tenders at 1s. 3d. and 29-32nds will receive in full. Last week remittances for Rs. 33,51,000 were sold for £222,117, making the total disposed of between April 1 and Tuesday night Rs. 6,36,97,035, producing £4,225,847. Next week 45 lakhs will again be offered.

THE COMING BUDGET DEBATE.

IT has long been a standing reproach to our Parliamentary system that the Indian Budget has been consistently delayed till the very last days of the exhausted Session. The carefully compiled and edited Statement of the Secretary for India is supposed to present an adequate account of the year's administration of an Empire of some 300,000,000 of people, and to afford an adequate occasion for the discussion of all the multifarious questions necessarily arising during a twelvemonth in a country nearly as big and quite as diversified as the continent of Europe. Last year, by dint of extraordinary effort, the debate on the Indian Budget was brought on about a fortnight earlier than usual, actually on July 26. This was something of a Parliamentary achievement; and the unexpected sign of a political grace raises a modest hope that it may yet be found possible, without ruin to the Constitution, to advance the date a little farther. Lord George Hamilton, we have good reason to know, will be anxious to help forward the desired consummation. For in the debate on the Address on February 25, speaking on Mr. Caine's amendment, he said, on the prompting of a question thrown in by Mr. Schwann, that, though he was not responsible for the disposition of the time of the House, yet "he would always be glad to get discussion on Indian finance earlier in the year." Now, going back to last year, we remember that on July 3 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman by a question pointedly drew the attention of the First Lord of the Treasury to the Indian Budget, suggesting that it was rather a pressing matter, for "public attention has been directed to Indian questions generally." Mr. Balfour, in reply, was unable to allocate a day at the moment, but he said explicitly that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was "perfectly correct in saying that I am anxious to advance the ordinary date upon which the Indian Budget is taken," and he added "I hope to considerably advance that date." Eventually the discussion was fixed for July 26. Mr. Balfour redeemed his promise.

One might begin to hope that earlier discussion would mean fuller discussion. How is the House to deal adequately with the menacing question of the Famine, in the brief hours left after the Minister's "statement"? How shall it consider adequately the necessity for enquiry into the essential causes of famine and the possible means of averting this insistent calamity? The Report of the recent Famine Commission ought of course to be before the House, but we daresay it will be lying quietly at Calcutta in the hands of the Viceroy, and there may be in some quarters a hope that its contents will prove ancient history by next year, and so pass into the oblivion of the archives without troublesome comment on this side of the water. We trust, however, that some independent member will insist on explanation of the delay. Even supposing the famine satisfactorily debated, how shall time be found for the urgent discussion of the position of the British Indians in South Africa? Yet, apart altogether from the local importance of this question, the reflex action on Indian sentiment is sufficiently serious. Then the pressing questions arising, or rather arisen, as to the size and the cost of the Army in India, especially in the light of its partial employment in South Africa and China, will, we fear, be relegated to a very minute fraction of the time necessary for any satisfactory consideration of the points involved. The separation of judicial and executive functions in India has waited for something like a century, and may, on the existing system, wear out another century; nevertheless it is a root question, and the case of Mr. Pennell has just brought it to a head in such a manner as to preclude any rational possibility of its neglect in the coming "debate."

We have already commented on the statement of Sir Edward Law in the Viceroy's Legislative Council (March 29 and April 19, pp. 148 and 184). We have seen how strong is the stress that he lays on the "combined heavy demands for military requirements and public works." It certainly does seem startling that, in the present conditions of India, the estimated expenditure on the Army should be raised by 8 or 9 per cent.—to £16,345,000, as against the past triennial average of £14,600,000. Parliament ought to be interested to know more particularly the grounds on which the Calcutta authorities have decided that they cannot find any more urgent object for the additional expenditure of a million and three-quarters of money—money so difficult to raise, and so painfully needed for works of peace and of internal development. We are all entirely agreed that, if not indeed "our whole existence," at any rate our comfortable and self-respecting existence, "depends on proper provision for the defence of our frontiers"—that is to say, if we could ever find out precisely where these frontiers are, for we hope that Lord George Hamilton is not to be allowed to adhere without question to his impersonal statement that the line defined by the Durand agreement "is held to be the external frontier of British India." At any rate, it would be useful to know who is menacing the Durand line, from without or from within, or who is in the very least likely to menace it if our own people would only let the tribesmen alone. We shall be very much surprised if Parliament is not capable of adding a scrutiny of a more independent and more searching character than is possible in the Calcutta bureaucracies. Anyhow, the public ought to know what is the meaning of this ominous increase on military expenditure in a time when large contingents can be safely despatched from India to South Africa and China for many months, and when there is no external menace visible on the horizon—except indeed it be the constitution of the new Frontier "Province."

Sir Edward Law joined with military expenditure the requirements of the public works. On railway and irrigation works the estimated capital expenditure in the year is set out as £5,395,000, of which "a beggarly crore" (as we have already called it) is assigned to irrigation as a protection from famine. Whether or not the expenditure on irrigation deserves approval depends altogether upon the facts of each particuar project, for though irrigation pays, directly and indirectly, on the whole, it is very easy to throw away money upon infructuous constructions. What, then, are the facts? Parliament ought not to be satisfied with the mere blessed word irrigation. As for the heavy expenditure on railways in contemplation, the justification is no less difficult to divine. One understands that projects in construction cannot be wisely dropped right out of hand; but why should new undertakings be entered upon? It cannot be for the prevention or the mitigation of famine, for we have been told by high officials over and over again that the railway system is long since sufficiently complete for these purposes, and we know that the recent famines have been famines of money and not famines of food. We are quite aware that there is keen support in some quarters here for a brisk railway development in India, and Sir Henry Fowler has voiced the opinions of business men in our midst. But it is for Parliament to consider such a railway extension as is proposed in the light of its trusteeship for India.

There will be, we hope, some endeavour to ascertain on what grounds the people of this country are still befooled with the catchword of "recuperative power." We have already expressed our inability to accept Sir Edward Law's reasons for proclaiming it on the basis of his Budget. Unless the Budget correspond with a prosperous condition of the people it cannot be a prosperous Budget, whatever the surplus it may show. Sir Edward himself admits "simultaneous serious depression in three such important industries as cotton, tea, and indigo," and it would have taxed his ingenuity to find many more "important industries" in the country, whether depressed or exalted. Will Parliament not be anxious to enquire into this depression of industries? And what of the greatest industry of all—the agricultural industry? The agriculturists are severely pressed, not merely in the famine districts, but in every province; and, on the other hand, that the outturn of the fields might, by reasonable Government encouragement, be very largely augmented. Why are these cruel contrasts still permitted to stare us in the face? And how can the Budget figures signify prosperity if the rayats are still ground down and two-thirds of them are in the hands of the sowkar? Parliament, we trust, will enquire how far Sir Edward Law is correct in inferring from the figures of imports and exports "commercial strength and a generally satisfactory situation." In the years 1896-97 to 1899-1900, the exports exceeded the imports by Rx.

32,12,04,679, Rx. 28,27,06,105, Rx. 44,34,11,318, and Rx. 38,26,43,429. Here is a "drain" that may well fix a statesman's attention, and lead him to ask how it is that India can keep on, year after year, buying from abroad so immensely more than she sells. Sir Edward Law says it indicates "commercial strength and a generally satisfactory situation." Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji thinks—and with only too good reason—that it is a fatal "drain"; or, to use Lord Salisbury's words, a "bleeding to death." Parliament should be concerned to make sure what it really is. For, if it be in fact a "bleeding to death," what follows? Even the "Times of India" (March 23) declares Sir Edward's tone to be "optimist—provokingly so to people who are still living under the shadow of famine, pestilence and commercial depression," and thinks he "could not have drawn up such an account of the condition and prospects of the country if he had been in Bombay during the last three months instead of Calcutta." Nor should Parliament forget the commentary supplied by the Indian census.

OUR LONDON LETTER.

WESTMINSTER, Thursday.

Politicians have had an exciting week, but the excitement has been of a kind in which the average man takes little interest. The Opposition, of course, has passed through a crisis; it does that once a month, if not oftener. But there must be something celestial in the composition of Liberalism. Its wounds are numerous, but they heal as quickly as they are inflicted. Milton's angels, with their effusion of ichor, were more vulnerable than the embattled factions of Imperialism and anti-Imperialism. The protagonists of the fray, like the schoolboys that they really are, whisper to one another, "Wait till I get you outside"; and accordingly the tournament is fought out at distant dinner parties. Within the House they appear to be excellent friends. Last week, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Asquith were supposed to be at daggers drawn; yet during the whole of the present week they have been sitting side by side on the front Opposition Bench, ostensibly the best of comrades. If the truth were known, it would probably be found that the dissensions of the Government though less conspicuous were really more profound. There can be no doubt that the contemplated abandonment of the Education Bill has seriously impaired the allegiance of the Duke of Devonshire.

"It is an hour inhospitable to reason's temperate word." William Watson never wrote a truer line, but the assembly to which it was addressed was scarcely an Areopagus. The Queen's Hall meeting made a great noise at the time, and it has made a greater noise since. Out in the streets the hordes of so-called patriotism, captained by hook-nosed and beady-eyed gentlemen from the city, howled against the police and threw mud at timid women, while within doors an audience of superheated enthusiasts passed resolutions demanding the restoration of Boer independence. Both factions got a little out of hand, and if bones were not broken by both it is certain that both administered bruises—always a favourite, if elementary, method of proselytism. Neither side, however, claims to have made any converts by the process.

Two things were accomplished by the meeting which will make it memorable. It proved unmistakably the existence in perhaps the most Jingoistic capital in the world of a great body of anti-war sentiment, strong enough both in moral fervour and in numbers to hold its own against a reckless and ignorant mob, incited, to extremes of violence, by pamphleteering stockjobbers and stockjobbing journalists. Secondly, it brought to boiling point the simmering revolt of certain members of the Liberal party in the House of Commons, who had been waiting for a pretext to renounce allegiance to their nominal leader. On the night after the meeting, Mr. Asquith, in a speech which has greatly fluttered the dovecotes of Liberalism, referred to its proceedings as a justification of his protest. It was really no justification at all. The particular proceedings of which Mr. Asquith complained were carried through in the teeth of the Liberals whom he sought to hold responsible. They were the work of men who cried "Shame" on Liberalism for its apathy, and who themselves were members of the Socialist party. But if not a justification for Mr. Asquith's speech, this remarkable meeting was certainly an opportune pretext.

Of the speech itself it is unnecessary to say more than has been said. It is already ancient history, but its effect remains and may continue to operate long after Mr. Asquith has repented its deliverance. One impression left by the episode is that the pigmies who now fill the places formerly occupied by statesmen cherish an exaggerated sense of their personal importance. Their squabbles, as Sir Edward Clarke might say, "become more and more sad." Mr. Morley in a moment of unaccustomed buoyancy dropped the remark that some of his friends had almost forgotten they ever approved of the war. It would have been nearer the truth, as Mr. Asquith's speech indicated, had Mr. Morley said that some of his friends had forgotten they ever condemned the war. Mr. Asquith began his record in this embittered controversy by denouncing the bare idea of annexation and by disagreeing with Mr. Morley in the latter's contention that annexation was inevitable. He now turns on his friends because a third party declares that annexation ought, at all costs, to be avoided. Where will this versatile philosopher end?

A revolt of the dukes is the next terror that seems to be awaiting Lord Salisbury's Ministry. The Duke of Devonshire has been giving his colleagues much trouble by his obduracy in opposing the abandonment of the Education Bill, and now the Duke of Bedford has taken to pouring ridicule on Mr. Brodrick's scheme of Army reform. Those ducal Whigs retain a traditional strain of independence, which makes them a thorn in the side of every Government to which they give a more or less capricious support. Lord Raglan positively perspired with nervous apprehension the other night as the Duke of Bedford passed in review the delinquencies of the War Office. For the rest the debate was of no great importance. It was an affair of pom-poms; the great guns declined to come into action. Perhaps they will open fire to-morrow night, when the discussion will be resumed.

A by-election at Stratford-on-Avon, in which all the arts of intimidation appear to have been practised, has resulted in the return of the Conservative candidate by a majority of nearly 1,800. Birmingham interested itself in the contest, with the natural consequence that Liberal meetings were broken up, Liberal speakers assaulted, and Liberal committee rooms wrecked. Mr. Jesse Collings, whose position at the Home Office should have predisposed him to counsels of law and order, went down to speak for the Conservative candidate, and distinguished himself in an argument with a Liberal by reiterating the phrase "Pro-Boer" till even his friends began to think that they had been entertaining a parrot unawares. But Mr. Chamberlain proved as barren as his henchman. "A seat lost to the Government is still a seat gained by the Boers," was his message to the constituency. A news agency, with cruel though unintentional irony, actually telegraphed to the Colonial Secretary enquiring whether this rallying cry was authentic.

For the ridiculously small sum of two pounds two shillings and no pence, as Mr. Mantalini might have said, flocks of the lowly-born were privileged last night to touch the hand of a duchess in friendly greeting, and to roam at will through the splendid saloons and galleries of Stafford House. Thus does Charity exploit the less exalted emotions of poor humanity. But despite the questionable taste of some of the advertisements, in which the opportunity of moving in the same atmosphere with titled personages was unblushingly put forward as an inducement to the common herd to disburse its guineas, the event was notable enough. Stafford House, thrown open on this occasion for the benefit of the Lifeboat Saturday Fund, enjoys a traditional association with noble causes. "Poerio and his fellow-sufferers," to quote from the souvenir of the fete, "still weak from confinement in their prisons at Naples; Garibaldi clad in his red garb; Livingstone and Charles Sumner, besides a host of princes, magnates, potentates, and plenipotentiaries, have ascended those storied stairs. Here it was too that Lord Shaftesbury advocated the cause of the white and Garrison that of the black slave." Never before, however, has even Stafford House raised so much money for a charitable cause as must have been netted at last night's festivities.

"AGRICOLA REDIVIVUS."

MR. THORBURN'S PAPER TO THE EAST INDIA ASSOCIATION.

INTERESTING DISCUSSION.

(FROM OUR OWN REPORTERS.)

On Monday last (June 24) Mr. S. S. Thorburn, late Financial Commissioner of the Punjab, read a paper before the East India Association at the Westminster Town Hall, entitled "Agricola Redivivus," describing the genesis and history of the Punjab Land Alienation Act. The Right Hon. Leonard Courtney presided, and among those present were Lord Reay, Lord Stanley of Alderley, Sir James Lyall, Sir Charles Stevens, Sir Roland Wilson, Sir John Jardine, Sir Lepel Griffin, Mr. J. B. Pennington, Mr. Fernandez, Mr. W. S. Caine, M.P., Mr. J. D. Rees, Mr. Romesh Dutt, Mr. W. Martin Wood, Mr. H. W. Wolff, Mr. Alexander Rogers, Mr. C. W. Whish, Professor Murison, Mr. Vaughan Nash, Mr. Gordon Hewart, Dr. Sarat Mullick, and Mr. N. B. Wagle.

MR. LEONARD COURTNEY.

Mr. COURTNEY, in introducing the lecturer, said the subject of the paper was one of the most debateable and difficult of the practical questions of to-day in connexion with the government of India. It was the discussion of the expediency of interfering with what might be called the relations of free contract in respect of the agricultural occupier of Indian land. Steps had been taken not always quite consistent with the opinions which had prevailed in this country in connexion with the question of landlord and tenant, and in the case of the Punjab there had been quite recently passed an Act materially affecting the position of the small owners in that province. Mr. Thorburn could speak on the question with authority. He had for many years been Financial Commissioner of the Punjab, and had the most intimate personal experience and the most hearty sympathy with those in whose behalf the legislation to which he had referred was passed. (Hear, hear.) The Bill was carried mainly by his exertions, supported by the Viceroy.

MR. THORBURN'S PAPER.

Mr. S. S. THORBURN, who was cordially received, said that ordinarily the forty million inhabitants of our islands took little interest in the affairs of their three hundred million fellow-subjects in India. When, however, a calamity, such as war, plague, or famine, imparted dramatic elements to news from our great dependency, the London dailies and monthly reviews re-discovered India, and vied with each other in reminding Englishmen of their responsibilities as rulers of an Asiatic empire. In 1897-98 India was prominently before the public. Our policy of push and demarcate had excited into ebullition the independent tribes on the north-west frontiers of the Punjab, and a series of boundary wars culminated in what was known as the invasion of Tirah. Since then, although the pax Britannica of India had been undisturbed, plague and famine had afflicted the land. The latter was nearly at an end for a time, but the former, robbed of its earlier terrors, continued. England, preoccupied with the struggle in South Africa, and for some weeks with the anti-foreign upheaval in Northern China, had been almost indifferent to India's latest troubles. During the acute period of the Boer War a disaster, or even "regrettable incident"—each an affair of a few hours—was more discussed in the London press than all the prolonged sufferings of the seventy million Indians whom plague and famine were torturing or frightening. Though for months now the situation both in South Africa and China had been rather exasperating than critical, speculation on the canal-system in Mars had occupied more space in our current literature than an economic revolution of far-reaching importance for all British India, which had just been carried through under the auspices of Lord Curzon. He referred to the first of a series of land-reform Acts designed to rescue the peasantry from their increasing enthraldom by money-lenders. This novel legislation had not been achieved without prolonged controversy between the executive officers of the Government—those who lived amongst the people and tried to understand them—and the bureaucratic few, who observed them telescopically with the detachment of distance, upheld the traditions of machine-rule, and directed the administration. The Punjab had been first selected for the new departure because its western half, inhabited by hardy Mohammedan tribes—all potentially fanatical and therefore dangerous—had been proved to be more in bondage to money-lenders than any other province in India; hence, further delay might have converted brooding discontent into active disorder. The Punjab was an agricultural country nearly as large as Great Britain and Ireland. Of its twenty million inhabitants 85 per cent. lived by farming, which was carried on by fraternities of peasant proprietors scattered throughout some twenty thousand villages. From the death of the Emperor Aurangzebe (1707) until we English wrested the country from the Sikh commonwealth (1849) there was no settled government. The rule of the temporary strongest prevailed, and each extracted what income he could from the village communities who possessed the land. Through all vicissitudes those communities maintained their old forms of self-government. Against them might had always made right. From ancient times each ruler of the day had regarded himself as the sole and universal landlord, entitled to exact from agriculturists as much of the produce as it was politic or possible to take. This was the case not only in the Punjab, but throughout India generally. We became then, as successors of the Sikhs, the sole landowners of the Punjab, the peasantry being one and all Crown-tenants. When, therefore, fifty years ago we rounded off the boundaries of our Indian estate by taking in the Punjab, we had a clean slate to work upon. At the time, and for some years afterwards, the conception of individual property in land hardly existed, except to a limited extent in regard to the cultivation round wells, particularly in the vicinity of towns, and in the east of the province. The community, not the individual, was the occupying unit. We might at once have considered the question of land tenure, but we had no time for it. The pressing need was money wherewith to meet the demands of the new administration. Our officers filled the treasury by adopting an ameliorated form of the Sikh system. They roughly assessed a lump sum on each village, and left the internal distribution and collection to the inhabitants themselves. Formerly, the State-rent, or, as we called it, "land revenue," was paid in kind, usually two-thirds or half of each crop. Such uncertain income was inconvenient for a settled government with budgets and regular disbursements. We reduced the demand to the estimated value in money of one-quarter of an average crop, and exacted payment on fixed dates, whether the yield had been good or bad. As coined money was still scarce with peasants, and their harvests varied from abundance to nothing, many communities were soon defaulters. Following precedent elsewhere, we recovered the arrears, and, in some tracts, secured punctuality in future by auctioning whole villages, or farming out the right of collection to contractors. A few years later we began what was called the "regular settlement" of the province—the preparation for each village of a field map, and the fixation for a term of years of the land-revenue demand for every cultivated plot therein, coupled with a register of title and occupancy. By so doing we, almost without deliberate design, created and recognised the right of the individual land-revenue payer to the ownership of his holding. These two fatal gifts—ownership and fixity of demand—supplemented as they were by the introduction of a complicated legal system, were the root-causes of the agrarian misery, which the Government of India had now at last attempted to cure—many years too late, alas! to benefit the large majority of agriculturists. Until we prepared our Punjab Doomsday Book—a work which it took twenty-five years to finish—each peasant's borrowing powers were limited to his next good crop, for, his title being insecure, the very identity of his fields being often unascertainable, he had no property to sell or mortgage to a cautious outsider. The regular settlement of his village completed, the peasant's assets and consequently borrowing powers appreciated to the market value of his holding. For some years the change from the old to the new order brought a specious affluence to the unsophisticated Punjabis. To the trading classes, hitherto the dependents of the agriculturists, our gift proved an El Dorado, to be gradually acquired by the exercise of inherited aptitudes, which the insecurity of Mogul and Sikh rule had formerly debarred them from using. Whilst we were organising and developing our administration, the game of borrowing went on smoothly enough for a time. But as centralisation and litigation increased, and the stamp-revenue rose higher year by year, grumblings began to be heard. The Government, however, had no misgivings. "These are signs of a nation's awakening, the natural concomitants of healthy progress and confidence" was the official pronouncement. By the end of the seventies the administrative machine for the Punjab was in perfect order, a beautifully finished and intricate arrangement of wheels, every one of which, great and small, was working in frictionless subjection to the great design of the maker—unsympathetic centralization. Like God on the sixth day of the creation, the Government "saw everything that He (they) had made, and, behold, it was very good." Certainly from a European standpoint "it was very good"; there was a chief court and subordinate courts by the score, law and rules copied from every statute-book in Europe, which regulated everything for everyone, and to interpret and misinterpret these laws a multiplying locust-swarm of pleaders had settled on the land. All this may have been satisfactory for those who profited by it—the Government, the courts, the lawyers, and the money-lenders—but it was ruinous for the people. For some years the self-complacent optimism of the Government was rarely challenged. A busy executive had little time and less inclination to question the wisdom of a pronouncement by Government. They were servants, not critics, and their master, whether as John Company or the British democracy, was a despot, who believed that what was good for Englishmen must be good for Asiatics. Until the Sepoy Mutiny India had been the estate of a private company, managed on business principles for the advantage of the shareholders. Upon the collapse of the company in 1857-58 England took over the business, and since then India has been an Empire held in trust by our people for the welfare of its people. Whilst an estate the directors thought of little but dividends, hence their management was exclusive and conservative. Thus, always conditional on the regular payment of the taxes, Indians were left alone. As an empire the old order was superseded. Progress and equal opportunity for all men were the watchwords of the new masters. Forgetting that it takes long years of ceaseless effort to appreciably elevate any race—let alone prejudiced, slow-witted masses of Asiatics—we acted in the Punjab, when introducing what may be called "our system," as if we expected that the results achieved in England after centuries of evolution would be there accomplished in a few years. We had overlooked the fact that "the people of India" are not its commercial citizens but the 270,000,000 of voiceless toilers of its villages and hamlets. Be-

tween 1858 and 1870 the Punjab was fully equipped with British institutions, all, perhaps, excellent for business men but premature by centuries for the Punjab peasantry. The rigidity of the revenue system was defended on account of its moderation, owing to which the shortness of bad seasons would be recouped from the superabundance of good years. The multitude of laws, though incomprehensible as yet to the illiterate people, were justified as a means of education, for were not these laws interpreted and applied by a Chief Court, supported and obeyed by some 400 judges and many hundreds of certified legal practitioners? It was not until the middle of the seventies that some of the more independent district officers began to cry out that "our system" was not the admirable machine it was officially represented to be. It was, they complained, forcing the people to borrow upon unconscionable terms, and reducing them to the position of serfs under classes who had until then been their servants. Such a view was energetically repudiated by the Government; it was contrary to the accepted principles underlying the whole edifice of English administration throughout India, and that edifice, except temporarily during the Mutiny, had stood the test of time. District officers, however, knew better than the bureaucrats. They knew, even then, that "our system" instead of fashioning needy, ignorant husbandmen into thrifty, intelligent citizens of the Empire, had brought already in the different provinces of India quite 50,000,000 of them to ruin. District officers had to possess their souls with patience. They recognised that things must grow worse before a remedy would be applied. Close hierarchies, such as we had in India, being the slaves of precedent and tradition, conceded no new thing except under the coercion of apprehension. Until some catastrophe came or threatened, they regarded reform-advocating subordinates as busybodies, and discouraged by all means in their power the formation and expression of a healthy public opinion. The truth of this broad assertion was established in Bombay, before the agrarian troubles in the Punjab became acute. In Bombay the same causes as later operated in the Punjab had conduced to impoverish and demoralize the people. The case for the northern province differed from that of any of the older "regulation" provinces of India. An insurrection in the Punjab would endanger the safety of our rule throughout India, elsewhere it would be merely "a regrettable incident." But for the bureaucratic self-sufficiency of our administration, its rigidity, want of sympathy, and worship of uniformity and European models, the evils which Lord Curzon was now correcting would have been faced and overcome a generation or more ago. For fully half a century before the degradation of the peasant proprietary became marked in the Punjab, executive officers had in other parts of India drawn attention to the popular odium with which our system was regarded in the villages, and had warned their local Governments that there was a limit to the endurance of the people. By the enunciation of comforting platitudes the Bombay Government had succeeded in staving off reform from 1852 to 1874. Throughout the whole of that period, as the Government repeatedly announced, the question continued under their "anxious consideration," a formula used by Indian administrations when they meant to do nothing. Suddenly out of a clear sky, as the Government thought, came in 1875 the thunderbolt: the peaceful rayats in twenty-four villages formed a Mâhratta Land League, and burnt their Marwari oppressors' shops, books, bonds, and mortgage deeds. A wholesale boycott of all usurers followed. Apprehensive of a general insurrection, the Bombay Government yielded to fear what they had refused to reason, hastily redressed some wrongs, and quieted the desperate rayats by promising permanent reforms of a drastic character. An effective Commission was at once appointed to enquire into all grievances and suggest remedies. Three years afterwards what was known as the "Deccan Rayats Relief Act" became law. This measure of spoliation, as the Opposition called it, established cheap and simple courts of equity for adjudicating between agricultural debtors and their creditors, empowered the new judiciary to vary contracts, directed that only moderate interest on the ascertained principal should be decreed, and enabled mortgagors to redeem their fields for a reasonable payment made in instalments, irrespective of the conditions under which the money-lenders' grip on the land had been obtained. The petty insurrections in the Deccan roused the apprehensions of the Government of India. Local Governments throughout India were consequently called upon to consider the whole question of land reform, and, if necessary, suggest relief measures. In the Punjab the subject had already attracted attention, and been under fitful discussion for some years. There the creation of a Chief Court in 1866, with its corollaries—the flooding of the province with precise laws and regulations, a multitude of civil courts, and an ever increasing crowd of hungry lawyers, had already wrought ominous changes. An epidemic of litigation had set in and become endemic; money-lenders were prospering, agriculturists sinking; the reports from the districts, supported by statistics of doubtful value, were filled with forebodings; the people were crying for more equity and less law. The Punjab Government promised further enquiries, and meantime attempted to placate the pessimists with platitudes. When the superficial enquiries had been completed, an official announcement appeared in 1874: "The condition of the peasantry was eminently prosperous." Four years later, Sir Richard Temple emphatically endorsed that verdict, only substituting for "prosperous" the phrase "creditable to British rule." His dictum was not accepted by the disinterested experts composing the Commission. "We learn," they stated in their report of 1880, "from evidence collected from all parts of India, that about one-third of the land-holding classes are deeply and inextricably in debt, and that at least an equal proportion are in debt, though not beyond the power of recovering themselves. . . . . It does not appear that in this respect (indebtedness) one province differs from another." If the general condition of the peasantry throughout India was bad, it was worse in the Punjab; yet there, as elsewhere, the executive—the men of action in the plains, who lived amongst the people—and the Government with its Secretariat—the men of the pen, who administered from pleasant retreats—disagreed as to facts and remedies. The inference was that in the Punjab, as in Bombay, the Government did not desire to face the inconvenient truth. In Bombay it required an insurrection to force the Government to do its duty to the people. In the Punjab that precedent would have been some day repeated, had not the case for energetic action been proved almost in spite of the local Government, and had not India in Lord Curzon possessed a Viceroy who had the courage to accept proven facts and legislate down to the needs and capacities of the Punjab peasantry. He now came to his own part in bringing about the reform of our system in the Punjab. In 1870, after an apprenticeship of four years in district work, he was placed in charge of a sub-division of Bannu, called Mianwali, on the left bank of the Indus, a roadless, bridgeless country as large as Devonshire. After two years of this isolation he was appointed settlement officer of Bannu. For the next seven years he led, for eight months in the year, a gypsy life in camp. He thus spent the most active period of his service working amongst a number of Mohammedan tribes, and gained a practical experience hardly possible in these latter days of centralization, railways, frequent short holidays, and constant changes in the personnel of the district staff. During those years he watched the growth of "our system." He saw family after family enmeshed by it, and gradually sink under it, until finally they retained but a precarious tenant-right over their lost fields, not through the law, but in spite of it, by terrorizing the new landlords. It was impossible to know those manly, simple-minded tribesmen without sympathizing with them as the victims of a mistaken system. In time he put the case before the Government, and a certain amount of discussion by correspondence followed, but nothing was done. Disheartened but not beaten, he decided to make the reform of our land-revenue and civil-justice systems the object of his service, and persisted in that determination for twenty years until he retired at the end of 1899, the cause won, though he was not present at the crowning victory. Unable to rouse Indian officialdom to action by official representations, he next attempted to appeal to those in England interested in the welfare of Indians, by publishing in 1884 an account of the whole case in a small book called "Musalmans and Moneylenders." Going home on furlough soon afterwards, he sent a copy to each member of the Secretary for India's Council, and followed that step up by interviewing the members one by one. Their attitude was sympathetic; but all, except one, were courteously non-committal; they were, they explained, an advising and criticizing, not an initiating, body; unless the local Government moved in the matter nothing could be done. The one exception was the late Sir Robert Montgomery, who persuaded the Secretary of State for India to have a despatch sent out to the Government of India, drawing attention to his (Mr. Thorburn's) book and indicating his willingness to consider such remedial measures as might commend themselves to that Government. Time passed, but still nothing was done. He had now to recognise that to energise the slow movement of the wheels of the Indian Governmental machine, and overcome the interests, traditions, prejudices, and convictions arrayed against reform, he should have to wait until chance gave India an exceptional man as Viceroy, or the long-suffering people themselves, having learnt combination, should achieve their own deliverance. He was almost despondent when in 1892 Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. Though his experience had been almost wholly in the Secretariat, and his bias of mind was legal, he was known to be able, thorough, and independent. He at once read all the official literature on the subject of land-reform, and in his frank, incisive way said to me, "Half measures won't do. It is the whole hog or nothing." In the cold weather of 1894-95 he marched through his (Mr. Thorburn's) division, and in his tour halted in the heart of a country which was sometimes a granary and sometimes a desert. As Sir Dennis approached the camp a great mob of excited peasants, earnest gray-beards most of them, surrounded his horse, some even thrusting horny hands upon the bridle, and kept on shouting at him, "We are ruined, Lord Sahib. The Kirars (Hindu usurers) and compound interest have robbed us of our lands." Mr. Thorburn suggested that tracts should be selected for general statistics, and then typical villages taken in them, where each original peasant-proprietor's debt and mortgage history should be worked out before the whole village for the last twenty-five years or so. The enquiry was agreed to and carried out. His first business was, whilst organizing a separate staff for the simultaneous and methodical collection of statistics in each circle, to enlist the co-operation of both sides, moneylenders as well as peasants. His assistants and himself spent some weeks in holding open-air meetings in the larger villages, explaining objects and the means by which they hoped to ascertain facts. The idea that their debts and mortgages were to be worked out in public at their homes delighted the people, who immediately jumped to the conclusion that at last their Sarkar was taking pity upon them, and that when their unfortunate plight was known the Sarkar would cancel all their obligations and restore their lost fields. At first pressure had to be exercised over the money-lenders to induce them to divulge their modes of doing business, and the particulars of their actual transactions. As soon as they realized that evasion would tell against them, and that no wholesale measure of spoliation was contemplated, they accepted the inevitable with a good grace and did all that was required of them, including the production of

coolie-loads of account-books, bonds, and other documents. They readily admitted that their present condition was unsatisfactory, as there was gambling uncertainty in their business, the attitude of the agriculturists rendering the execution of decrees and the profitable farming of mortgaged lands always difficult and often impossible. The lending classes professed to be willing to reduce their usual rate of annual interest from 36 to 12 per cent., provided that the recovery of the debt was made cheap, quick, and certain. They admitted that the law, as administered, facilitated sharp practices; but, as most of them were men of integrity, a whole class should not be condemned because it contained a few black sheep. They obtained decrees—too easily, perhaps—after a large expenditure; but decrees were often waste paper, as they could not be executed. They were, therefore, constrained to sell money dear. A loan on a bond was now practically irrecoverable, hence lenders were beginning to make advances on mortgages only; a mortgage with possession was a tangible, though dangerous, security, as mortgagees who insisted on obtaining their legal rights were murdered with impunity; the Sarkar failed to protect life and property, and thus failed in the first duties of a Government. These assertions were always received by the Mohammedans present with gloomy but visible satisfaction—a stroking of beards and muttered assents of "Beshak" ("Of course"). Such statements were always fortified by a string of instances. "Our system," whilst favouring the longer purse and quicker brain, bled debtors and creditors indifferently, collecting from both immense net profits under the head "Law and Justice," yet hedging round the execution of a decree with so many obstructions that, but for the moral pressure it put upon judgment debtors, the large majority of lawsuits against agriculturists would be infructuous. Rick-burning, cattle-poisoning or maiming, and in extreme cases assassination, had hitherto partially protected the peasantry in depressed tracts from the legal consequences of that fatal facility for incurring debt which "our system" so unfortunately fostered. The crime being rarely brought home to its perpetrators, the Government fell back upon repressive devices. When the collective responsibility of communities was thus enforced, the epidemic of lawlessness was kept within bounds; but, even under a rigorous executive, more agrarian outrages were committed without detection in one year in almost any one of the nine wholly Mohammedan districts of the Punjab, than was the case throughout Ireland during the worst period of the Land League domination. The collecting and sifting of facts occupied about six months, after which two more were spent in preparing a report on the whole case. What was proved might be summed up in a few sentences:—

1. Up to 1870 the amount of agricultural indebtedness and of land alienated to money-lenders was insignificant. Since that year out of the 535 villages for which statistics were collected, in 126 money-lenders were in possession as purchasers and mortgagees of from 31 to 51 per cent. of the cultivated land, in 210 of from 20 to 30 per cent., and in the remaining 148 of from 10 to 20 per cent. only. Further, in 360 of the 535 villages the general indebtedness was so large that the eventual expropriation of the great majority of the still unencumbered landowners was inevitable. The largest percentage of the comparatively prosperous villages, 148 in number, were in the remote Hill Circle.

2. Out of the 742 families of peasant proprietors living in the twelve villages in which the enquiry had been carried out holding-by-holding, 444 had lost all their lands, 112 still held some, but were seriously indebted, and 186, though many owed money, had not yet lost any land, chiefly because their agricultural incomes were supplemented from sources outside farming, such as pay from service in the army, or police. In only thirteen cases had a family once indebted extricated itself.

3. In most cases the first considerable debt had been incurred after a bad harvest to pay the land revenue or buy food, seed-grain or plough-cattle.

4. Ordinarily a grain-debt was doubled within two years and a money-debt within three.

5. The Civil Courts of first instance, the judges in which were mostly men of the money-lending classes, being over-worked, having each to dispose of annually 3,300 cases in their eleven working months, and being bound by the Contract Act and other laws in force, heard causes perfunctorily, decreeing according to the letter of the balance struck, bond or mortgage deed.

6. Lenders kept agricultural accounts in a loose unbusiness-like manner, because the courts rarely examined accounts, and performed the functions of registrars and collectors of debts rather than of courts of justice.

7. The Punjab Government had persuaded itself that the annual progress of peasant-expropriation by money-lenders was diminishing because the percentages of alienations were calculated on the gross acreage of each village, and not, as should have been the case, on the still unalienated acreage. The fact that alienations cannot long proceed at a high or increasing rate—each acre acquired by a capitalist "pro tanto" reducing the area left to agriculturists—had been overlooked by the Government.

8. In the Hill Circle the peasantry were comparatively unencumbered, presumably because of the length and risks of the journey to the nearest civil courts and the lawless clannishness of the people, factors which caused lenders to pursue their trade with some regard to popular feeling upon fair dealing.

The conclusions of fact were not challenged by the Punjab Government. An enquiry, pushed with determination for a few months only, settled a controversy which had been dragging on for more than a quarter of a century. That within a generation the birthright of a people, universally acknowledged to be "the finest peasantry in India," had been filched from them by "our system" was a cause of humiliation for the self-sufficient bureaucrats of India. The corollary, too, was equally unpleasant: the most extensive economic achievement of British rule throughout our Eastern Empire had been the reversal of the old relations between agriculturists and money-lenders. The danger was now recognised. How was it to be averted? Happily for the people and the safety of our rule in India, in 1894 Lord Elgin, a statesman of broad views but, unfortunately, small experience, was sent out as Viceroy. Soon after his assumption of office, he boldly proclaimed that the reform of a system which was impoverishing the people was necessary throughout British India, and that, if possible, legislation on the subject would be passed before the expiry of his term as Viceroy. Not having the grasp, material, and support in high places, which are necessary before even the Autocrat of India can carry out any change, however small, much more a great economic revolution, he failed to accomplish his purpose within the time at his disposal. What he could do he did thoroughly. Aided by a sympathetic Revenue Secretary—an old Punjabi, Mr. Denzil Ibbetson—he caused to be drawn up a comprehensive digest of the whole case for land reform throughout British India, and thus prepared the way for action by an abler and more determined ruler of men than himself—Lord Curzon. It was soon after the issue of that digest that the results of his (Mr. Thorburn's) enquiry reached the Government of India. Had Lord Elgin been a stronger man, he would at once have decided to drop his ambitious project of passing a reform measure applicable to the whole of British India, and have pushed one through for the Punjab alone. Instead, he sat still, awaiting the views of the local Governments on his own State paper. The conflict of views continued in a narrowing circle, until Lord Curzon appeared as the "deus ex machina," and cut the Gordian knot by cutting short further "great argument about it and about," and causing to be introduced into his Council a short, comprehensive Bill which, if passed, would effectually confine the interest of non-agriculturists in arable land to a few years' occupation as mortgagees or lessees and no more. In the full-dress debate which followed the speech of the member in charge of the Bill—Sir Charles Rivaz—the present Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab—Sir Mackworth Young—who had long opposed any large measure of land-reform, stated that "the object in which all are agreed is to provide a corrective for the results of our own acts, [and] to mitigate the almost revolutionary effects of British rule applied to land-tenures in the Punjab." In closing the discussion, Lord Curzon, addressing outside critics rather than his Council, emphatically endorsed the views of the reform party in the Punjab, and, as regards the merits of the Bill, observed:—

"The issues at stake are, in my judgment, as momentous as any that can attract the attention of the Government of India. There is no country in the world that is so dependent upon the prosperity of the agricultural classes as India. There is no government in the world that is so personally interested in agriculture as the Indian Government. We are, in the strictest sense of the term, the largest landlords in creation. . . . . If it be asked why we have selected the Punjab as the field of this experiment, the answer is that there the problem is most serious; there the evil has reached, or is reaching, the most dangerous dimensions; and there it possesses a political and social as well as a purely agrarian complexion. But our vision is not centred upon the Punjab alone. This canker of agricultural indebtedness which is eating into the vitals of India . . . . . is not one of narrow or contracted application, though in particular parts it may be more grave in its incidence than in others. We shall, doubtless, require to handle it in different ways in different areas." The Bill was duly published, and the expression of public and expert opinion on its provisions invited. In the nine months allowed for the purpose agriculturists made no sign. Their minds were impenetrable to new ideas, being pre-occupied with the problems of their daily bread and the next land-revenue instalment. On the other hand, the money-lending classes, and those who lived on litigation, once more paraded the stock arguments against land reform, predicted the failure of the attempt to stop what they were pleased to regard as progressive evolution, and tried to win over the peasantry to their views by telling them that the Government was confiscating their proprietary rights, and reducing them to the position of Crown tenants. Their efforts to create a popular agitation against the Bill failed. As introduced, it (1) prohibited the permanent alienation of agricultural land, except to defined agriculturists; (2) only permitted certain forms of temporary alienations to non-agriculturists up to a limit of fifteen years, the land then returning unencumbered to the family of the alienor; (3) disabled alienors from making any further disposition during the currency of the temporary transfer; (4) declared the hypothecation of agricultural produce for more than one year to be illegal; (5) prohibited the execution-sale of agricultural land; and (6) confined jurisdiction under the Bill to Revenue Officers alone. The measure was finally passed in October last almost as it stood when introduced, excepting that sundry small concessions of doubtful wisdom were made to the Opposition, for instance, the limit for temporary alienation was extended to twenty years, and an agriculturist was empowered to mortgage his proprietary rights to any one for any period, provided that he retained possession of his holding as an occupancy-tenant, paying as rent not more than double the land-revenue assessment thereon. The obvious defects in this remarkable return to paternal government were two:—(1) No sufficient provision was made to facilitate the rise of thrifty farm-labourers to the position of peasant-proprietors; and (2) as capitalist-mortgagees had only a short-term interest in their holdings, every incentive was given them to exploit, none to improve, the land. These two shortcomings would doubtless be remedied upon the first amendment of the

Act. The measure of its success would largely depend on the simplicity, comprehensiveness, and practical good-sense of the executive rules framed for its working. Outside this great act of restitution the Government of India had been slowly moving in other directions with a view to rescue agriculturists from the unfortunate consequences of "our system." A series of small relaxations in laws or rules, some of general application, some limited to the Punjab, had been recently carried out or proposed. Thus, the courts were now empowered to vary contracts—a reform just legalized in England in the new Money-lenders' Act—the law of pre-emption would probably be amended for the Punjab, so as to restore that right in each village to members of the old village community alone, and it was possible that the harsher provisions of the Civil Procedure Code would shortly be softened. On the revenue side a measure of elasticity was being gradually introduced into our fixed land-revenue system, but would not be effective unless, during drought periods, the whole or part of the demand were almost automatically suspended or remitted, and State aid readily and opportunely granted for the purchase of seed-grain or plough-cattle. In addition, the Government of India had announced their intention of establishing State Agricultural Banks, provided that a practical scheme could be devised. When, if ever, all these reforms—the last, perhaps, excepted—came into operation, and, in addition, the rules of recruitment for judicial and clerical posts under Government were so amended that qualified agriculturists received a reasonable share of good appointments, "our system," instead of being an instrument for undermining and destroying the ancient village communities of the country, should be their support. That our reproach might be speedily taken away from us must be the desire of every well-wisher of our Indian fellow-subjects.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Thorburn having concluded the reading of his paper amid loud applause,

The Chairman (Mr. Leonard Courtney) said they had listened with great pleasure to a paper on a most debateable subject, upon which opinions were no doubt largely divided. He saw many gentlemen present who had had experience in high office in India, and he had no doubt that a profitable discussion would follow. He would first invite Sir James Lyall—(hear, hear)—to give them the benefit of his opinion.

Sir James Lyall.

Sir James Lyall said that he was in India in 1898 on work connected with the famine, and was informally consulted by Sir Mackworth Young with reference to the Punjab Alienation Bill. The Bill undoubtedly went further than anything which he had himself suggested, but nevertheless he had given it as his opinion that it should be tried as an experiment. (Hear, hear.) He could not say, and it was impossible at the present stage to say, what the result of this legislation would be. But he was afraid that it would confiscate a good deal of money which was now owed, and that in the case of many of the poorer and weaker peasant-proprietors it would not prevent their lands from passing into other hands in the long run. It might prevent their lands from passing into the hands of money-lenders and cause them to pass instead to the stronger among their tribesmen. That result might be better for them and better for the country. (Hear, hear.) For six years, in the early 'seventies, he had worked with Mr. Thorburn in the Punjab and had always admired his enthusiasm on behalf of the peasant-proprietors. (Hear, hear.) But he thought then, and he was still inclined to think, that Mr. Thorburn's enthusiasm sometimes made him a partisan. There were signs of partisanship in the lecture they had just heard. They recognised of course that it was a brief address on a large subject, and perhaps in an address of the kind it was necessary to sketch broadly and in somewhat violent colours. But this had been carried to an extent that was misleading. Anyone reading the paper might think that before the early 'seventies the purblind bureaucrats (as Mr. Thorburn would call them) at the head of the Punjab Administration had had no idea that the rights of the peasants would be endangered by our system. But that inference would be untrue. The three leading men who had framed the beginnings of the system of administration—John Lawrence (afterwards Lord Lawrence), Sir Robert Montgomery, and Sir Donald Macleod—had had the requisite foresight. They were not secretariat bureaucrats. The keynote of their policy was to retain the status of the village communities. They had seen the ruin which had been wrought elsewhere and they sought to avoid it in the Punjab. For example, early in that time they took the sensible measure of making it a rule that the Civil Courts should not be able to sell land in execution of a decree without the sanction of the highest revenue authorities. That sanction was hard to get. All that it was fair to say was that the measures of these men were not wholly effectual and that something else had been tried. The truth was that it was the limitation of the Government demand for land revenue that turned the property of the cultivators into a valuable security and really made its passage into the hands of the money-lenders inevitable. The new Act was undoubtedly a great experiment, but no one could say how it would work out. (Applause.)

Sir Charles Stevens.

Sir Charles Stevens said that he was not prepared with an elaborate argument upon Mr. Thorburn's paper, but he could speak of his experience in Bengal where, as Land Revenue member of the Bengal Board of Revenue, he had to deal with cognate questions. So far as the paper described the lecturer's enthusiastic efforts, it was most interesting. (Hear, hear.) But it ought to receive "anxious consideration"—(laughter)—if it was suggested that the new legislation should be copied for the whole of India. He himself had investigated the needs of different districts in Bengal, and had come to the conclusion that in Bengal legislation of the kind was not needed. No doubt in the extreme North-West corner of Bengal there was a tract in which the cultivators were to some extent losing control of the land, but in that tract land was most easily got. He was not bigoted in this matter. When the settlement in a district of Chutia Nagpur was going on he had recognised that the peasants were not fitted to contend on equal terms with Bengalee usurers. (Laughter.) He had therefore suggested that free contracts should not be permitted in that district. But it should be added that in that district such things were unusual. No Bengalee usurer would have emerged thence alive. (Laughter.) But now the times had changed. In discussions on this question he had advised that the Courts should be empowered to go behind the contract. This remedy would meet most of the difficulties in Bengal. The application of the new Act, or anything like it, to India generally would be no simple matter. (Applause.)

Sir John Jardine.

Sir John Jardine thought it was a matter for congratulation that in Mr. Thorburn we had a man who looked deeply into facts and tried to make our system palatable to the peasant. (Hear, hear.) Of course the time had not come to dogmatize. But Mr. Thorburn had at least convinced the local authorities and the supreme authorities that his measure was an improvement. He was therefore to be congratulated. Mr. Thorburn indeed had seen more results from his work in his own lifetime than Caird saw or many another. (Hear, hear.) The question raised bristled with many points. The Punjab Act was not quite a new experiment—it rather followed what was done in Bombay soon after the peasants rose against the money-lenders, cut off their noses, and destroyed the books by which they might prove their debts. That outbreak brought the Deccan Relief Act. That measure was still a subject of controversy, but at least it had stood in part the test of time. (Hear, hear.) The Act allowed the Courts to go into the history of a debt. It showed that even in the Bombay system, excellent as it was, there was room for improvement, as there was in all things whether in the East or in the West. He noticed in Mr. Thorburn's paper an undertone of "pitching into" the Courts of Justice. Similarly it was said at the time of the Deccan riots that they were really due to the action of the Courts. But it should be remembered that the law which the Courts had then to administer was passed by the Executive Government of Bombay under Mountstuart Elphinstone, who kept the interpretation of the law under his control. It should be remembered also that it was not until the High Courts were established in 1862—and then not by civilians but by barrister-judges—that equity of redemption was introduced in the Bombay Mofussil. Equity of redemption was invaluable, and put a stop to a great injustice. It was not till later that it was seen that what had happened was what the framers of the system had actually intended. The country was suffering from want of capital, and they said it would be a good thing to get rid of rayats who had not enough capital to improve the land. But then this plan was forgotten by the Revenue authorities, who rounded on the Courts as if what had taken place was their fault. When he was Collector in Poona the peasantry complained to him that their land had passed from them to the money-lenders. The houses, he noticed, were those of foreigners from Guzerat, who spoke a different language. Mr. Thorburn in his paper had remarked that the first big debt was commonly incurred by an agriculturist after a bad harvest, and that a debt doubled in two years or a money debt in three years. Those facts showed the need of dealing liberally with the people after a famine. (Hear, hear.) Sir William Wedderburn and Mr. Robinson Souttar were perfectly right therefore in pressing for a national grant for that purpose. (Hear, hear.) Most Bombay men, he thought, would say that the power of sale had worked well in spite of the money-lenders. The great thing in Indian administration was not to be too ready to upset systems. The right thing was to set about improving them. No one would say we should abolish Courts altogether. In 1825, as Bishop Heber pointed out, when Mr. Elphinstone came into Guzerat they were discussing the sort of questions which were discussed now. At that time Persian was actually being used as the language of the County Courts. Bishop Heber's journals were well worth looking into. They should remember that the East India Company was anxious to be just and moderate, but its servants had only just changed from being commercial men. They were not students of Adam Smith. It was fair to remember, too, the extreme difficulty of their task, which could be seen in Mr. A. Rogers's book on Bombay. The administrators of that time seemed to have tried everything that Turgot or Arthur Young could have thought of. (Applause.)

Mr. Romesh Dutt.

Mr. Romesh Dutt said that Mr. Thorburn had spoken of the village communities as owning property jointly. That was the practice up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. He looked back with regret to that old institution which was well suited to the genius of the Indian people, and was the earliest form of self-government in the world. But he thought Mr. Thorburn made a mistake in saying that the right of alienation was the gift of the British Government. There never was a time when the Indian peasant had not this old customary right. What the British Government did was to legalize this ancient customary right, as could be gathered from the Blue-books of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century. It was plain from those records that administrators in India re-

cognised this customary right, which was as old as the civilization of India itself. The main question raised by Mr. Thorburn had often come before the Government of India. In Bengal the prohibition of alienation had been discussed at least twice in the last twenty years. In 1883 it was discussed in connexion with the Bengal Tenancy Bill. Recommendations were then made that in the interests of the cultivators the right of alienation should be taken away from them. But enquiries, in which he himself took a part, showed that transfers were being frequently registered, and yet that the peasants were not being made the slaves of the money lenders. The reports drawn up on the matter were sent to Mr. MacDonnell, now Sir Antony MacDonnell, who agreed in the view that the cultivator was not to be saved by being made a life-tenant for his holding. A measure of general confiscation was thus avoided at that time. But the proposal came up again from the Punjab. He would say nothing of the needs of the Western Punjab which he knew only as a tourist. But he would say that a cry of alarm rang through India, and in 1896 in Bengal they were asked again whether it was not necessary to deprive cultivators of the right of alienation in order to save them from their own unwisdom. They were taken aback. They wondered whether they were living in the time of Haroun Al Raschid, and whether the cultivators of the soil must suffer because the Khalif's favourite wife had had a bad dream. (Laughter.) The Bengal Government were again advised to drop the proposal. He could speak from personal knowledge of the Orissa division, where, if anywhere, the peasants needed protection against money-lenders. But he was able to show to the Government of Bengal that the peasant there had exercised the right of alienation for sixty or seventy years, and that their land was not passing to the money-lenders. Once again the proposal was rejected. But only last week he had seen from the Indian newspapers that a Bill was before the Bombay Legislative Council in which it was proposed to create a new class of cultivators who should not have the right of transferring their holdings. He would not judge a Bill which he had not seen. But on broad economic grounds he maintained that failure must attend any effort which sought to save the cultivators by confiscating their rights, and lowering the value of their property. Economic laws which operated elsewhere also operated in India. It was sometimes said that cultivators in India were like children. They might be ignorant and superstitious, but, taken generally, they were conscious of their own interests, and keen in defending them. What they wanted was a moderate assessment and clear rights, which they were able to defend. He would say again that he made no remark about the Punjab Act, but the extension of this Act to the rest of India would be a calamity. (Applause.)

Lord Stanley of Alderley.

Lord Stanley of Alderley said the pith of the paper was to be found in the concluding passages. An agricultural bank would be worse than the money-lender because its books could not be so easily burnt. (Laughter.) The official figures showed that the revenue collected in India was rapidly increasing. There had been a great increase in the last financial year, though it was a year of famine. The Government of India, he thought, should have retained Mr. Thorburn in Calcutta for consultation during the passage of the Punjab Land Alienation Bill. (Hear, hear.) The object of the East India Association should be to secure a permanent settlement for the whole of India. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

Sir Lepel Griffin.

Sir Lepel Griffin said that he had been asked by Mr. Thomas Thornton, who was for a long time secretary to the Government of the Punjab, to read to the meeting a passage from a letter of Mr. Thornton's, which appeared in "The Times" on October 30 last year. In this letter Mr. Thornton, commenting on the Punjab Land Alienation Act, said that the remedy proposed, however well intended, seemed likely to be much worse than the disease. Mr. Thornton now added that as the currency legislation had reduced the value of the rayat's silver ornaments it was specially hard to reduce the value of his land as well. (Hear, hear.) Having read Mr. Thornton's letter, Sir Lepel Griffin said that for his own part he thought—and he submitted the point to Mr. Romesh Dutt—that the question of the Punjab must be considered from a special point of view.

Mr. Dutt: Exactly. I said so.

Sir Lepel Griffin: Very well, then we are agreed. The Punjab was the home of our Native Army, and it was essential that we should maintain the good-will, the loyalty, and the fine high spirit of the Sikh and Mahometan gentry. He believed that the measure, if it were successful, as he hoped it would be, would tend to the contentment of the Punjab and the security of British rule in the East. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. J. D. Rees.

Mr. J. D. Rees said that just as Sir Charles Stevens had repudiated this measure for Bengal, so he would like to repudiate it for Madras. He was on the Viceroy's Council when it was proposed, by an amendment of the Contracts Act, to allow the Courts to go behind contracts of all kinds. He objected then to a prejudging of the case as between the agriculturist and the money-lender. It was by no means true that in all cases the agriculturists were unable to take care of themselves. He agreed with Mr. Dutt that the rayat did not need this sort of measure. Let the Punjab have it if it liked, but let us not stretch the rest of India on the bed of the Punjabian Procrustes. He could not assent to Sir John Jardine's view that the Deccan Relief Act had been a great success. He read in an opposite sense the reports of those who administered it. He agreed with Sir James Lyall in regarding the Punjab Act as an experiment. (Hear, hear.) He desired once again to press Mr. Dutt on the point whether the British Government had raised the assessment on the rayat. He denied that we had raised the assessment. We had on the contrary reduced it. Mr. Thorburn said so in his paper, and he again challenged Mr. Dutt to deny it. When Mr. Dutt defended the property of the rayat he evidently admitted that the rayat had property. Mr. Thorburn, in his paper, had asked why the Punjab had been chosen as the field for this experiment. One answer was given in the paper, but another was that the Punjab was the favourite wife—(laughter)—as the Government of India spent so much time at Simla.

Mr. Dutt asked leave to say a few words in reply to the challenge of Mr. Rees, but the Chairman remarked, amid laughter, that that "might be rather dangerous."

Mr. Leonard Courtney.

The Chairman said that he would now call upon Mr. Thorburn to reply. But perhaps he might be allowed to make one or two observations first. He had said at the outset that this was a most debateable and difficult question, and the discussion had shown it to be so. Great differences of opinion had been expressed, culminating in the speech of Mr. Rees, who was apparently determined that everybody should tread on the tail of his coat. (Laughter.) For his own part he approached this question with the utmost diffidence and doubt. But he would like to submit the query whether the world-wide phenomenon of the agriculturist struggling with difficulties might not be really part of the nature of things. They saw this phenomenon all over the world. It was not confined to India or England. It was to be found in Russia, Egypt, France, and in some parts of the United States—everywhere the same tale, the agricultural classes struggling with difficulties generation after generation. Perhaps one reason was that agriculture was the oldest of all occupations, and it was subject to the perpetual discovery of new processes and new lands. There was a continual movement in the world, and as new processes were introduced, they caused others to go under, and so we saw the perpetual struggle of the agriculturist who followed the old methods, and was hard hit by the new methods. Often he lost the little capital he had, until a new man came in to succeed where he had failed. It might be that these were things which no administration could alter. But in looking at India an outsider might ask whether the change from the old system to the English system had not pressed the rayat more or less severely. (Hear, hear.) He was glad to think that the rent exacted from the rayat by the British Government might be less than was got from him under the ruder system of the older rule. But this rent was now got with little or no relaxation or accommodation to varying circumstances. (Hear, hear.) He should hesitate to accept the dismal suggestion of Sir James Lyall that you put the cultivator on the road to ruin by giving him a capital which he had not before. If the difficulty of the problem was great, perhaps we ought to meet it, if not by falling back upon the old elastic methods, then by some process of banking under Government control or under State sanction in order to break down the difficulty that now beset the rayat who had to pay a uniform revenue in bad years and in good. But when all was said and done we were still confronted by the possibility that in some parts of India the population might not yet be ripe for the adoption in full of the principle of the free contract. To some races it seemed as if free contract was like "fire-water." Statesmen were now prohibiting or limiting the supply of that dangerous product of civilisation to Native races, and it might be essential to limit if not to prohibit free contract in certain parts of India until by education the people came to be able to enjoy what we in our arrogance considered the great privilege of making our own bargains. But he would end as he had begun—he approached the subject with the greatest doubt. Legislation was apt to produce effects the reverse of what its authors intended. At least they ought to watch carefully and over a long period the working of particular enactments. Different opinions had been expressed regarding the Deccan Relief Act. It might well be that it was too early yet to say whether the Deccan Relief Act was a success or not. (Hear, hear.) So too with the Punjab Act. They must watch it very carefully. It represented a tentative process forced upon the British Administration in India by experience which involved political danger as well as social degradation, and as there was political danger it was the more incumbent upon the Government to take action. (Hear, hear.) He now called upon Mr. Thorburn to reply, and at the same time he would convey to him their thanks for his extremely interesting paper. (Applause.)

MR. THORBURN'S REPLY.

Mr. Thorburn said that one thing disclosed by the speeches was the easiness of destructive criticism. Criticism was one thing, but it was another thing to propose substitutes. At the same time the speeches showed how very necessary was Sir W. Wedderburn's movement for a National Union, which should obtain special enquiry into the condition of typical villages. (Applause.) Mr. Rees had repudiated for Madras any legislation on the lines of the Punjab Act. Well, they in the rest of India looked upon Madras as the benighted Presidency—(laughter)—and he didn't mind what the attitude of Madras was. But he would like to ask Mr. Rees—What about the Moplahs? As for the Deccan Relief Act, it was so far a success that the money-lenders where it operated were ceasing to expropriate the peasant-proprietors. At present our system in India assumed that the masses were educated, but the assumption was incorrect. Mr. Rees had said that the Punjab Government was the favourite wife, but at all events it had just been turned out of heaven. (Laughter.) With regard to Sir James Lyall's speech, he had

sat some years ago at the feet of Sir James Lyall, and he must say that he had treated a rather dogmatic paper with great consideration. He said that the paper was drawn in strong colours. But the literature dealing with the subject would fill the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and he had to compress it. As for the charge of being a partisan, nobody with convictions could avoid it. (Hear, hear.) It was said that the early Lieutenant-Governors of the Punjab foresaw the effects of our system. Yes, but they sat on the fence, and did nothing. So, too, in Bombay nothing was done until the peasantry rose. Lieutenant-Governors rarely initiated measures. Mr. Courtney had already remarked upon Sir James Lyall's statement that the root of the evil was the limitation of the revenue demand. The Government of India took 30 millions a year in land revenue, and if they surrendered it to-morrow it would pass in a few years into the hands of the money-lenders. They must have some remedy for that state of affairs. Sir Charles Stevens had spoken of Bengal. But in Lower Bengal, the rights of 75 millions of people had been given away in a permanent settlement, and they had not yet got a cadastral survey. He agreed with Sir John Jardine that the time had not come to dogmatise. Sir John said he had pitched into the Courts. Well, he knew something about judges. A judge at Lahore had told him that in three cases out of four he had to pass decisions contrary to his ideas of equity and common-sense. Another judge had told him how he used to take blue spectacles into Court and go to sleep, and yet another how he used to take his judgments into Court written out beforehand. (Laughter.) Some of his critics spoke of the difficulty of legislation. Everything new was difficult, but it often became easy when it was faced, as they had seen in the case of the Death Duties. In reply to Mr. Dutt, he would say that before the time of the British Government the rulers of India took as much of the produce as they chose. What was the use of ownership under those circumstances? He did not think there was much value in land in India before the days of British rule. Mr. Dutt had spoken of Orissa. He would remind him that in 1856 the Sonthals rose because of the oppressions of money-lenders, and began to march on Calcutta. Since that time they had been excluded by special legislation from the sphere of the civil courts. He quite agreed with Lord Stanley of Alderley that remissions of revenue in time of famine should be a matter of right and not of grace. (Applause.)

On the motion of Sir Lepel Griffin a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the Chairman, and the proceedings terminated.

MEMORIAL TO MR. NOWROSJEE N. WADIA.

(From Our Own Reporter.)

An interesting ceremony was witnessed at Brookwood on Wednesday last, June 26, when there took place the dedication of the Parsee Cemetery and the consecration of the new "Agiary," and the Mausoleum erected in memory of the late Mr. Nowrosjee N. Wadia, C.I.E.

The company, of whom perhaps the following were the most notable: Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Sir M. M. Bhownaggree, K.C.I.E., M.P., Mr. N. N. Wadia, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji (Chairman of the Committee), Mr. Bonaji, and Mr. N. J. Moolla (Secretary of the Zoroastrian Fund of Europe), travelled by special train from Waterloo Station, and arriving at Brookwood Cemetery, walked in procession to the portion specially set apart as a Parsee Burying Ground. This Yima-vara, or "sleeping place," is laid out on the traditional plan of the Persian Paradise. The Mausoleum in the centre represents the seven-staged "Heavenly Mountain," from which the four paths go towards East, South, West, and North. At the entrance to each of these paths there will be in course of time a "pylon," or open gateway, copied from one or other of the gateways of the Palace of Xerxes at Perepolis, as they have been restored by Charles Chipiez and George Perrot. The most important will face the East, with lion-capitals, and the "feroher"—the symbol of "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His Wings"—surmounting the pillars, coloured red. The one facing the South, already erected by Messrs. Cyril Webb and Arthur Messer, has bull-capitals, and the "feroher" is enamelled in gold.

The new Agiary, or temple, which has also been erected by Messrs. Webb and Messer, was designed from the ruins of a double gateway of the Palace of Xerxes. Here, the sacred fire having been lit with sandal wood and frankincense, the consecration prayers were recited by Messrs. Dastur and Massani.

After this ceremony, the company repaired to the Mausoleum, a square sepulchral structure of Portland stone, reproduced from the Tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae, standing on a base of seven steps, and covered by a turquoise blue enamelled tile roof, gabled at both ends.

Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., after giving a most elaborate and detailed account of the new Agiary and Mausoleum, said the absorbing interest of the Parsees, or modern representatives of the ancient Medes and Persians, to their Aryan brethren of the West was that they were the only Aryas who had through every vicissitude of fortune preserved through three thousand years the faith common to all proto-historic Aryas. This simple faith in a God of infinite power and goodness, vaguely defined, and frankly and guilelessly worshipped through the elements, was developed into the definite type of dualism known as Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism, or the belief in two independent and all but equipollent, and ceaselessly opposed principles of good and evil. This doctrine as it spread from Media into Persia gave rise to the great religious schism between the Eastern and Western Iranians, which led to the emigration of the former from Persia to the valley of the Indus, from which they later spread into the valley of the Ganges, and through Sindh into Gujerat and the Mahratta country, gradually everywhere becoming differentiated as the great historical and profoundly idiosyncratic Indo-Aryan race of Brahmanical Hindus. The Parsee religion, he said, might be briefly summarised as follows: "To know God as One, and the Creator of all things; and the exalted Zarathrustra as his true prophet; and the religion of the Avesta-au-Zand as brought by him from God; to obey all the commandments of the Mazdashna religion; to shun evil and wickedness, to seek good and ensue it; to pray five times a day with the face turned to some bright and glorious object, the Sun, Fire, or the Sea; to believe in the place of inquisition and expiation below; and, in the day of general resurrection and judgment, to hope for heaven, and to fear hell; that deeds not creeds determine retribution, in accordance with the reckoning of divine justice, and mercy; for none but God can pardon, and redeem, and save; and only He has always done what He willed, and will always do as He wills, by the law of His own in-being goodness, which at the last shall prove victorious over evil, and sin, and suffering." The moral law of the Parsees was concisely expressed in the well-known formula: "Be pure in thought, word, and deed."

Sir G. Birdwood then presented a sprig of the sacred Homa plant, a block of Gumbenjamin for the sacred fire, a block of sandal wood, and a bag from Assam identical in character and design with the bags held in the hands of Persian kings for incense and sandal wood, in worshipping the deity.

Sir M. M. Bhownaggree, K.C.I.E., M.P., in paying a tribute to the memory of the late Nowrosjee Nasserwanjee Wadia, C.I.E., said that the consecration of these new structures gave them the privilege of rendering homage to the memory of many departed members of the Parsee race who had endeared themselves in life to their friends by their good qualities and their work, and whose mortal remains were deposited in permanent repose in that beautiful acre of England's fair soil. Two among that consecrated group claimed the tribute of their reverence more particularly in connexion with that afternoon's ceremony, as it was in their memory that those sacred buildings had been raised. He need not tell them that he referred to Nowrosjee Nasserwanjee Wadia and Merwanjee Rastomjee Dalal. Their distinguished and good friend Sir George Birdwood had described in great detail the conception of those structures, which reproduced after the lapse of centuries near the capital of the mightiest Empire of to-day, three specimens of that fine Iranian architecture which was not the least notable feature of the capital of the most powerful Empire of those days, of which their ancestors were the builders. In sketching the life of Nowrosjee Nasserwanjee Wadia, he said that that was the man whose memory they cherished, and for whose mortal remains that handsome mausoleum was a fitting receptacle. The Parsee community was poorer by his loss; but he had left it a precious heritage and a rich example. His wife, who was his devoted helpmate through life, and the inspirer of many of his philanthropic acts, had endowed them with that handsome Agiary or Chapel in his memory. To her at that moment once again they sent the sympathy of their inmost hearts, and it was their prayer that the God of mercy might console her in her loneliness.

Sir M. M. Bhownaggree then read a letter from Lord Reay, who wrote as follows:—"Unfortunately I am unable to attend next Wednesday. Pray give expression to my great regret, and my sympathy with the object of the ceremony. The monument in memory of Mr. Wadia will keep his memory alive in England. Bombay needs no monument because the beneficial result of his varied activity cannot fail to impress those who would tread in his footsteps. He was a living example of devotion to duty, of self-sacrifice, and of appreciation of the needs of India in the industrial sphere, which deserve to be upheld to future generations."

Mr. M. R. Boyce, in the absence of Mr. D. Byramjee, delivered an address in memory of the late Mr. Merwanjee Rastomjee Dalal, in whose honour the "Dalal Gateway" was erected.

Mr. N. N. Wadia said that after listening to the learned discourse delivered by Sir George Birdwood, and the speech made by Sir M. M. Bhownaggree, he found he had little left to say beyond formally making over, on behalf of his mother, the chapel to the managers of the Zoroastrian Fund of Europe for the use and benefit of all Parsee residents and visitors here. He also took the opportunity of making over to the custody of the managers the mausoleum erected in memory of his late father, and trusted that the managers themselves might look after the proper and perpetual maintenance of the mausoleum in good order.

Mr. D. Naoroji said, as chairman of the committee, he accepted the charge which Mr. Wadia had now placed upon them. The committee bound themselves to carry out the conditions that had been mentioned, and hoped that those conditions would be fulfilled faithfully by their successors. He paid a high tribute to Sir George Birdwood for his good work in connexion with both the present and other undertakings. He could not help feeling while listening to the remarks of Sir George Birdwood as if he were in the midst of those ancestors of theirs that he had described, and was learning from their great words and great deeds. Although the Parsees were but a small people they had attained a great position in the world. They had inherited from their ancestors the love of truth and that catholic charity for which the Parsees had up to this time distinguished themselves. He hoped the Parsees would preserve this heritage in all generations in the future, and that they would continue to be respected in the world. (Cheers.)

Mr. N. J. Moolla, Secretary of the Fund, thanked Sir George Birdwood for advising the managers of the Zoroastrian Fund as to the buildings.

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